

# WHY I'M NOT KJVO

## Introduction:

KJVO (King James Version Only) teaching is one of the most destructive errors that has crept into the Grace Movement, Mid-Acts Dispensationalism. Just as when Israel's power was broken (Lev. 26:17) when the nation divided into two kingdoms, so too a great deal of the Grace Movement's power was broken when the KJVO teachings divided it into two groups. It has closed doors of fellowship, dividing fellow-believers, whole churches, long-time friends and even close-knit families. If this were a Trump Rally, I would chant: Purge it out! Purge it out! And if it were a Reagan Rally, I would say: KJVO leaders, TEAR THIS WALL DOWN!

If you read to the end of this short booklet, you will be rewarded with an informative quote from the King James Bible translators themselves, a wonderful illustration a reader gave me that sums up everything I will try to say in the next 15 pages, and a list of the major biblical principles KJVO teachings violate.

**Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same *thing*, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).**

## Part #1: THE RULE OF MULTIPLICITY

One error that has crept into Mid-Acts Dispensationalism relatively recently (1980s) is KJVO—King James Version Only teaching. Its proponents claim, in one way or another, that the KJV is a perfect, inerrant, translation of God's Word in English, and, as such, is the only translation needed. While we all might wish this were true, wishing doesn't actually make it true. Here is WHY I'M NOT KJVO:

1. The most fundamental reason I'm not KJVO is BECAUSE IT OBVIOUSLY ISN'T TRUE! Our recent studies of Ephesians and John demonstrate this. In Eph. 1:5, the KJV has "adoption of children." The problem with this is that God and Paul don't say "adoption of children." They say "son-placement" or as in the New King James Version (NKJV) "adoption of sons," which is a very different concept than that portrayed by "adoption of children." In other words, if you only use the KJV, you will miss out on the main thrust of Paul's teaching in the first half of Eph. 1.

And in the Gospel of John, the KJV uses the word "miracles" throughout (Jn. 1:11; 2:23; et al.). The problem with this is the God and John NEVER use the word "miracles" in John. They use the word "signs" ONLY as the NKJV makes clear. A "sign" may be miraculous, but it doesn't have to be. "Signs" can also be prophetic, as demonstrated repeatedly in the Old Testament. In other words, if you only use the KJV, you will miss out to some degree on one of the major

themes God wants us to get from John's Gospel (Jn. 20:30-31). We could easily add to these examples, but this suffices to demonstrate the point.

To try to gain assurance by pretending something is true when it is obviously and plainly is NOT true is not faith. It is just wishful thinking. It is not real assurance. It is false assurance. We like living in a fantasy world of our own making where we can be in control, but if we stay there too long the harder it is to return to the REAL world.

So, the question is not: Did God promise to preserve His Word/s? We all agree He did! The question is: HOW DID HE PRESERVE HIS WORD/S?

2. KJVO proponents say He did this by creating a singularity, one single inerrant English translation, the KJV. But what they miss is that in any area of life and in every operation in the world, this is the worst kind of preservation that gives only the lowest level of assurance of accuracy and truth. A single event or account is never the best witness to something because it might just be a fluke, an anomaly, a coincidence, an accident, a misperception; it might just not be true at all. Single events, anecdotal accounts (like most of what we read on the internet) assume connections and make conclusions that upon closer evaluation and with more evidence are not true.

I knew a woman who heard an account of a man who used OFF Insect Repellent and soon after had a heart attack and died. Based on this 1, single account, she assumed using OFF causes heart attacks and warned everyone she knew to stop using OFF, including her husband. Ironically, after he stopped using OFF, the husband soon after had a heart attack. So, now she has 2, single accounts—one that said using OFF caused heart attacks and the other that said NOT using OFF causes heart attacks. What did she really need to assure her of the truth? She needed multiple accounts, a multiplicity of evidence that comes through a preponderance of data. There have been many studies on the health effect of using OFF, involving tens of thousands of people that assure us of the truth that there is no correlation between using or not using OFF and having heart attacks.

This is true in every area of life. The best way to assure the preservation of the truth is not through a single account but through multiple accounts. This is called the Principle/Law/Rule of Multiplicity. It is a universal operating principle, including the biblical world. Let's look at some examples. Think about the Law System. The best form of evidence is not the account of one witness. It is hard to establish the truth and convince a jury to convict based on one event or account. One account may be incomplete or a misperception. Even a straightforward confession alone isn't enough. The person may not have done the crime but confesses to it because they are mentally ill or on drugs or protecting someone else. Who knows? The police need to send the Crime Lab in to collect as much evidence as possible to provide the greatest assurance of truth. The BEST assurance of the truth comes not from a single account but from a MULTIPLICITY of accounts.

I worked as a scientist, and when I first started, I was chided for trying to make decisions and establish “truths” based on little data from just 1 or 2 experiments. My manager called it a rookie mistake and told me not to bother him again until I had run a Design of Experiment that required hundreds of experiments, so that there would be a multiplicity of evidence that could be used to provide assurance of the truth so that we could make the best decisions possible.

Or think of the miraculous healing claims of charismatic Christianity. It is always single accounts, usually occurring in distant lands where they cannot be verified. But when you look at the data on millions who self-identify as charismatic, the multiplicity of evidence shows that charismatics get sick and die at the same rate as everyone else, including unbelievers. If they could really do this, why wouldn't they just go down the street to Children's Memorial Hospital and heal all the sick babies, assuring what they claimed with a multiplicity of accounts?

In conclusion, in the real world, the best way to provide the assurance of the preservation of the truth is not through a single account but through a multiplicity of accounts, and the more the better. A single account may be good and reliable and useful, but additional good and reliable accounts are even better. But does this hold true in the biblical world as well?

3. Yes, it does. One of the most fundamental principles in the Bible as commanded in the Law of Moses is that 1 witness is not enough to provide assurance of the truth. There must be at least 2 or 3 witnesses who agree (Deut. 19:15). One witness is not enough. The bare minimum is 2 witnesses and preferably 3. But the very best is as many witnesses as you can find, a **MULTIPLICITY** of witnesses!

This is an inter-dispensational principle. Paul used it to provide the assurance of the preservation of his word (2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19). We could add to this the countless witnesses to Jesus (Jn. 1 and 5:33-36; et al.), and the 500+ witnesses God used to assure the preservation of the truth of the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:6).

So, we see that the same principle that operates in the real world also operates in the biblical world. The best way to preserve the truth, definitely and assuredly, is not through a single event or account (as good as that might be!) but through a multiplicity of events and accounts, that take into account the preponderance of evidence. And this leads us to our next question. How did God preserve His Word through history? We will just be looking at the New Testament background through the Greek Majority/Received Texts, but everything said here about them also holds true for the Hebrew Masoretic Text, which is the basis for the Old Testament.

4. God did not preserve His Word through the 2,000 years of Christian history through a single manuscript but through a multiplicity of manuscripts as preserved in what is now called the Majority Text (M) and Textus Receptus (TR). The former (M) consists of 5,600+ manuscripts and the latter (TR), depending who you talk to, is the collation of at least 40-50 and most likely 100s of manuscripts.

The great textual expert Dean Burgon in the 1800s said he defended the KJV (though he was not KJV-ONLY—he thought it was the best translation at that time) because it used the Textus Receptus, which represented the Majority Text. What is uncertain is what he meant by “represented.” Some take it to mean that TR represented M in the sense of across-the-board sample, an exact picture of M in miniature. Others take it to mean TR represented M in the sense of being the best of M, kind of like a music group who has 20 albums but only 1 Greatest Hits album. Since the collators of the TR collection probably didn’t know of or have access to all 5,000+ manuscripts of the M collection, the latter is probably the best option. They took what they had access to either on hand or were given access to during their extensive travels, which Providentially turned out to be the best of M.

But let’s not get side-tracked with M or TR. That’s a good discussion for another day but either way it has no bearing on what we are talking about here because BOTH HAVE WILDLY EXCESSIVE MULTIPLICITY. To demonstrate the significance of multiplicity, I will use M with its 5600+ manuscripts because we know its number more specifically. But everything we say about the excessive multiplicity of M (with its thousands of manuscripts) also holds true for the excessive multiplicity of TR (with its 100s of manuscripts).

Through a scan of some KJVO literature and websites, I think we would all at least generally agree about the importance of the multiplicity of manuscripts that form the basis of the KJV. One argument KJVO proponents make to explain the superiority of the KJV is that it is based on a large number of Greek manuscripts while most modern translations are based on only 1-2 shorter/corrupt manuscripts.

But what they miss, is that the same Rule of Multiplicity they use to RULE IN Textus Receptus and to RULE OUT the Critical Text, and, therefore, most modern translations, also RULES OUT the notion that the best way to provide assurance of the preservation of God’s Word in translation is with just 1, single English translation, the KJV. It may be an excellent translation (and it is!). It may provide assurance of preservation (and it does!). But because in KJVO it is alone, a singularity, it cannot provide the BEST AND HIGHEST level of assurance of preservation.

KJVO proponents themselves betray the truth of this by the numerous times they refer to the underlying Greek text, Greek-English translation helps like concordances and Bible dictionaries and even the NKJV! They inherently recognize the value of a multiplicity of evidence. It is a simple fact of life that no one can deny, and if we do, we do so at our own peril.

God decided that assurance of the preservation of truth required at least 2-3 and the more witnesses the better! For instance, He decided that the assurance of the truth of the Resurrection required 500+ witnesses. So too, He decided that when it came to the assurance of the preservation of His Word through history it required the hundreds of witnesses in TR and the thousands of witnesses in M. And if multiplicity was necessary in Greek, multiplicity is no less necessary in English. God did not throw away His basic Law of Multiplicity when it came to translation by producing only 1, single witness in English (as good as that is!). Assurance of the

preservation of the truth requires at least 2 and preferably 3 faithful translations: AND THE MORE THE BETTER!

While 1 account can be good and even the best, and all we have at times, having multiple faithful accounts is always better. We need to be consistent. We can't apply the Rule of Multiplicity when it is convenient and works with us (ruling in TR and ruling out CT), and then throw it away when it becomes inconvenient and works against us (only 1 English translation, the KJV)! That would be dishonest. That would be like making all the players of a board game follow the rules except ourselves. There is a word for that: Cheating!

5. Let's see how the Rule of Multiplicity works to enhance the assurance of the preservation of God's Word. The KJV is the best and most reliable translation not because God supernaturally/miraculously created it inerrant, but because it is the faithful representation of the multiplicity of Greek manuscripts. Here is how multiplicity works. Again, we are going to use the 5600 number of M to demonstrate this. In the last century, they used to say that M consisted of 5,000+ manuscripts with 99% agreement. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century they say M consists of 5,600+ manuscripts with 99.5% agreement. Of that, 0.5% variants, 75% are minor differences in name spellings and pronoun use. If we exclude those, it brings the whole COLLECTION into more than 99.9% agreement.

And this leads to the most amazing thing about multiplicity: As it increases IT BECOMES SELF-CORRECTING! At the 99.9% level of agreement, for every 1 manuscript with a variant there are 999 others that don't have that variant. It's obvious which one to go with. Even if we use the 99.5% level of agreement, that means that for every 5 manuscripts with a variant there are 995 others that don't. Again, it is clear which one to go with.

But we need to go one step further. This means that the best assurance of the preservation of God's Word doesn't come through any 1, single perfect INERRANT witness but through the multiplicity of imperfect ERRANT witnesses that work together to overrule variants with overwhelming data that AUTO-CORRECTS with a preponderance of evidence, resulting in a COLLECTION that AS A WHOLE is inerrant.

If this was the best way to preserve God's Word in Greek, it is also the best way to preserve God's Word in English. The English world is fortunate to have many complete and partial translations of TR that can begin to provide multiplicity of evidence to enhance the assurance of the preservation of God's Word. We have the KJV, the NKJV, many Greek-English translation helps like concordances and bible dictionaries, several Greek-English Interlinears, which together increase multiplicity well beyond the required 2 and preferably 3 witnesses. The NKJV is especially helpful NOT to replace the KJV, but to increase multiplicity by giving an additional faithful translation of TR that was carried out according to specific translation rules—like more stringent care in translating verb tenses and consistency in word usage. In addition, the NKJV also includes the M readings in the margin notes. Finally, it also modernizes the language for future generations.

## 6. Summary and Conclusion

- a. Because of the Rule of Multiplicity, the KJV is a good and even the best faithful translation because it is based on a faithful representation of the multiplicity of Greek Manuscripts.
- b. Because of the Rule of Multiplicity, modern translations based on the CT's 1-2 manuscripts that don't agree with the others are inferior.
- c. Just as the Rule of Multiplicity provided the assurance of the preservation of God's Word in Greek copies, it also provides assurance of the preservation of God's Word in English translations. We cannot use the Rule of Multiplicity when it is convenient and agrees with us, and then throw it away when it is inconvenient and disagrees with us!
- d. Other partial and whole translations like the NKJV and Interlinears, concordance and dictionary translation helps, work together with the KJV to provide multiplicity that works together to establish, clarify, and even correct when there is a preponderance of evidence.
- e. In reality, even those who claim to be KJVO recognize the Rule of Multiplicity. In other words, those who claim to be KJVO in WORD are not really KJVO in PRACTICE.
- f. As with the multiplicity of Greek manuscript evidence, God's truth going all the way back to Moses is never best preserved through 1, single witness but through a multiplicity of faithful witnesses that function together to mutually support and correct, bringing us into the fullest light of God's Word. The same is true of translations, including the KJV.
- g. To close the door on all other faithful witnesses that would increase multiplicity diminishes the assurance of the preservation of God's Word and is, therefore, not only irresponsible but foolish as well.
- h. KJVO is an over-reaction to the threat of 1-2 modern manuscripts that scholars put so much confidence in since the 1800s and perhaps in addition to a perceived threat from the NKJV in 1982. But the answer is not KJVO that pretends the KJV is inerrant when it is obviously is not, but through the real-world way God works via the biblical Rule of Multiplicity of witnesses.